



Swedish Jurisdictions and the Records They Kept

By Geoffrey Fröberg Morris AG®

gfrobergmorris@gmail.com

Have you wondered what jurisdictions existed when your ancestor lived in a time and place? This presentation will offer a general explanation of how some jurisdictions in Sweden came to be, why they were created, and what type of records they kept.

Medieval

By about 1,000 a.d. the Svear and Götar began to form the foundation of a Swedish kingdom. A mapping out of the country into church diocese was done during the 1100s. In the 1200s the land that would become modern Sweden was still divided into provinces (Landskap) that date back to prewritten history. At this time the kingdoms political center shifted towards Mälardalen and Stockholm quickly grew in importance. Taxes on the land within a specific location were paid to a "borg" where part went to the support of garrisons. The appointed slottsfogden managed both the borg and the slottslän. In 1389 the Swedish King Albrekt was defeated by the Danish –Norwegian Queen Margareta in Falköping. In consequence the Danish-Norwegian and Swedish union was formed in Kalmar in 1397, hence called the union of Kalmar. This union continued until Gustav Vasa broke away the Swedish powers in 1523.

After the breakup of the union of Kalmar and the election of Gustav Vasa as King (called Gustav I) the Vasa dynasty was established. Gustav I laid the foundation for the modern Swedish state. He increased a centralized national power with an effective bureaucracy. By the 1600s many jurisdictions were created. As most of the records that we use for Swedish genealogy are from the mid 1600's up to the early 1900's let's take a closer look at the jurisdictions and records from this time period.

Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions

The Parish (Församling or Socken)

The parishes were formed in early medieval times when people built a church in the places they would gather for religion. As the population grew in rural areas or cities, new parishes were created or old ones were divided. When the population of a place increased, the work load for the priest increased as well necessitating a division of the parish. The priest would keep track of the residents of the parish by organizing the parish into neighborhood (rote), village (by) and/or farm (gård or hemman). Each village and farm had a name and sometimes also a number (especially in the southern Sweden). The geographic size of a parish was influenced by the population density. The boundaries for the parishes were mostly set (especially in the southern

part of Sweden) before recorded history. Many parishes have remained virtually unchanged, while others have been combined with the evolution of society.

Parishes in Cities

Small towns would have one parish for the community. Larger cities would have multiple parishes within the same city. With urbanization the number and size of city parishes grew. In larger cities, there are **territorial** parishes (meaning the parish has a specific boundary) and **non-territorial** parishes that were offered for the whole city such as the German merchants in Stockholm. Depending on the city, sometimes there is a main parish for the residents of a city (stadsförsamling) with a "rural" parish (landsförsamling) for the residents living in rural areas around the city.

Parish Records

Födelse och dopbok: Birth and christening record

Lysning och vigselbok: Engagement and marriage record

Död och begravningsbok: Death and burial record

Husförhörlängd: Household examination

In och utflyttningslängd: Move-in and -out record

*There are many other records that a parish created. See Nationell Arkivdatabas (NAD) to see a full listing for the parish of interest.

Pastorat (like a Chapelry)

A pastorat (translated means parish) is the geographical area that a minister has responsibility for within the Swedish Lutheran church. It is made up of one, two, or more congregations (församlingar) depending on the circumstances. The head minister (kyrkoherden) of the parish often had assistance by another minister called a komminister (sometimes called kaplan). The parish that the minister lives in is called the mother parish or moderförsamling. The other parish(es) in the pastorat is called the annex parish or annexförsamling. Sometimes the priest kept one record of the whole pastorat in one book, other times there is a separate book for each congregation. Multiple pastorats make up a kontrakt (deanery.)

Diocese (Stift)

In Sweden there are many kontrakts, each one with many pastorats in a diocese. The diocese has authoritative jurisdiction over the pastorats. Every diocese is under the direction of a bishop. Each diocese has a central administrative organization called domkapitel. Multiple dioceses make up an arch-diocese that is under the direction of the arch-bishop. The bishops work together in leading the Swedish Lutheran church with the arch-bishop in Uppsala.

Diocese Records

Handlingar: Supporting documents for the cases

Protokoll: Record of items brought to the attention of the diocese

Skiljobrev: Records regarding divorce

Visitationsprotokoll: Record of diocese visitations to the pastorats

Äktenskapshandlingar: Documents regarding marriage (i.e. matters of diocese approval)

Civil Jurisdictions

Fögderi (Kronofogde and Häradsskrivare)

The county was divided into areas called a fögderier (-deri = singular.) Each fögderi had an appointed Kronofogde and Häradsskrivare over the area. The Kronofogde was responsible for collecting taxes, fines, and fees. He would carry out compulsory auctions, and was the manager over the Länsman. The Häradsskrivaren was subordinate to the Kronofogden. His responsibilities included creating the mantal tax records and the real estate tax records (jordebok.) Like the kronofogde archive, the häradsskrivare collections were inconsistently preserved. For family history research the häradsskrivare archive is a resource to look for additional copies of tax records. Because the kronofogden was constantly traveling with his duties, the records he kept were inconsistently preserved.

Kronofogde Records

Auktionsprotokoll: record of auctions
records

Kronouppbördsböcker: tax collector

Bötesredogörelser: accounts of fines

Saköreslängder: record of people fined

Femårsberättelser: five yearly accounts

Skattläggningar: tax assessments

Gästgivaridagböcker: innkeepers' records

Soldattorp: soldattorp

County Administration (Länsstyrelse)

The use of län (counties) is an organizational concept that has evolved through the years. In medieval times there was a Slottslän, Underhålls Län, Pantlän, and a Tjänstelän. All of these types of län supported the nobility, royal family, or military needs. By 1634 it was decided to reform the provincial structure (landskap) into a county structure (län) kingdom wide. When the county boundaries were created, some counties matched the old province, other provinces were divided into multiple counties, and some provinces were combined to create a county. During the centuries that followed the number of counties fluctuated. By 1810 there were 24 counties which generally remained the same up until 1997.

Each county was led by a Länsstyrelsen which was made up of a Landkansli and a Landskontor. The Landkansli was responsible for permissions and appointments. The Landskontor was responsible for all economic matters such as tax collection.

County Administration Records

The länsstyrelse archives include records from the offices of the landkansli and the landskontor. In the landkansli you will find among other records passjournaler (record of people who requested a travel pass), gästgivari dagböcker (the record of people using the government inns), and correctional facilities.

Landskansli Records

Fångvård: records for correctional facilities

Gästgivari dagböcker: record of people using the government inns

Passjournaler: record of people who requested a travel pass

Landskontor Records

Avkortningslängder: delayed taxes

Mantalslängder: record of the mantals tax

Generalmönsterrullor: the general muster rolls
normal order

Restlängder: taxes or fees paid out of

Jordeböcker: the real estate tax

Tiondelängder: tithing

*Duplicates of the mantalslängder and the jordeböcker were sent to Stockholm.

Judicial Jurisdictions

District Court (Häradsrätt or Tingslag)

The härad in Sweden is referring to a smaller jurisdiction that in early times could have been associated to a population group or to a place that had a specific geographical boundary. Whatever the case, the härad in Sweden started with a judicial nature. All of the provinces (landskap) were divided into smaller areas called Härad throughout mid to southern Sweden, and Tingslag or Bergslag in Northern Sweden. In coastal areas they might be called Skeppslag. The härads would use a tingplats as the place of judgement. Sometimes the härad had its own tingplats, other times a tingplats was shared with other härads. Eventually the tingsplats evolved into the Häradsrätt (a local court at the lowest judicial level). In the cities they were called a Rådhusrätt. Where multiple härads shared a tingsplats they might have united the härads to become a Domsaga.

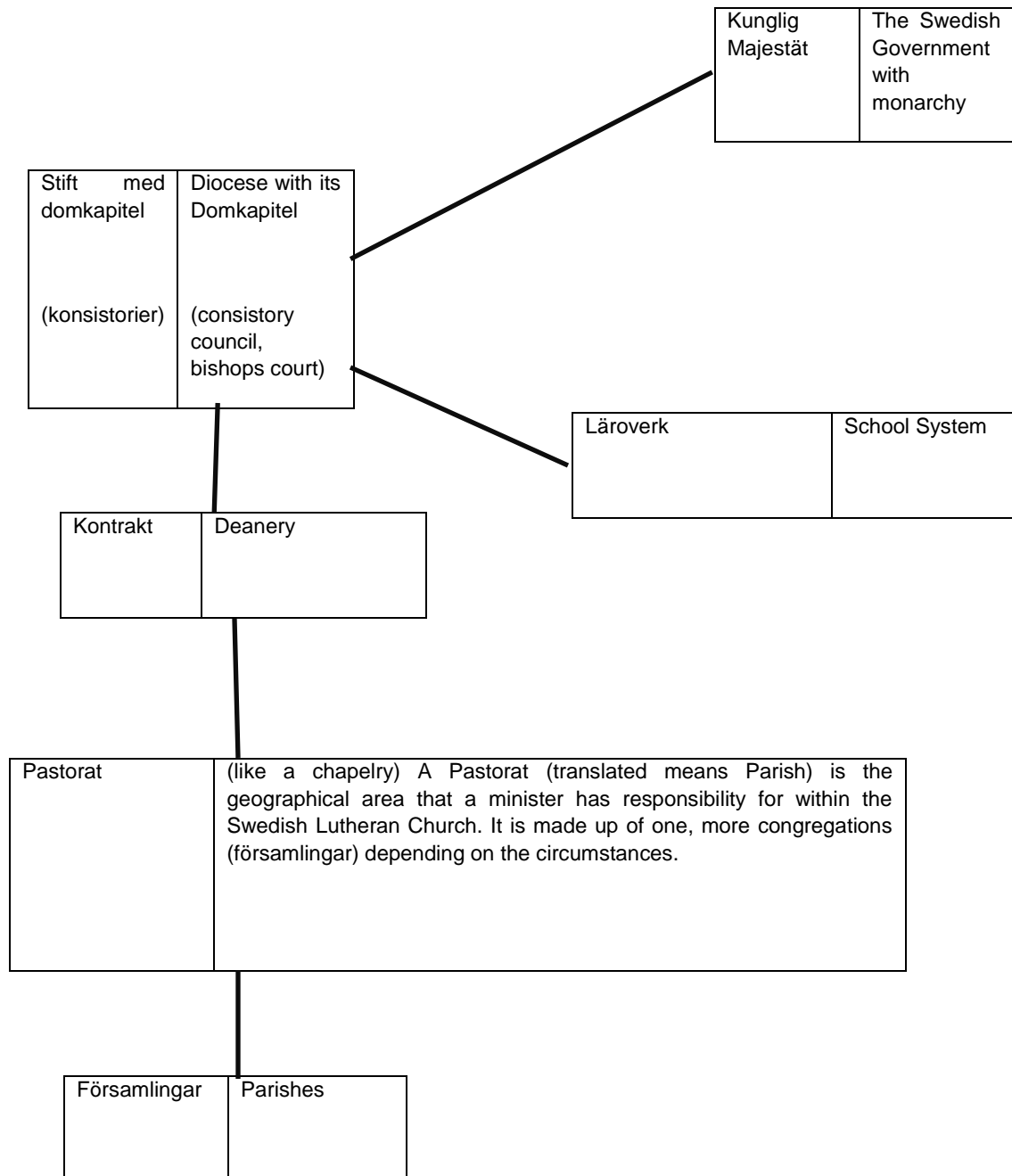
District Court Records

Dombok: a record of court proceedings. Generally regular court sessions were held 3 times a year.

Boupteckningar: a record of probates (division of estate after a person died)

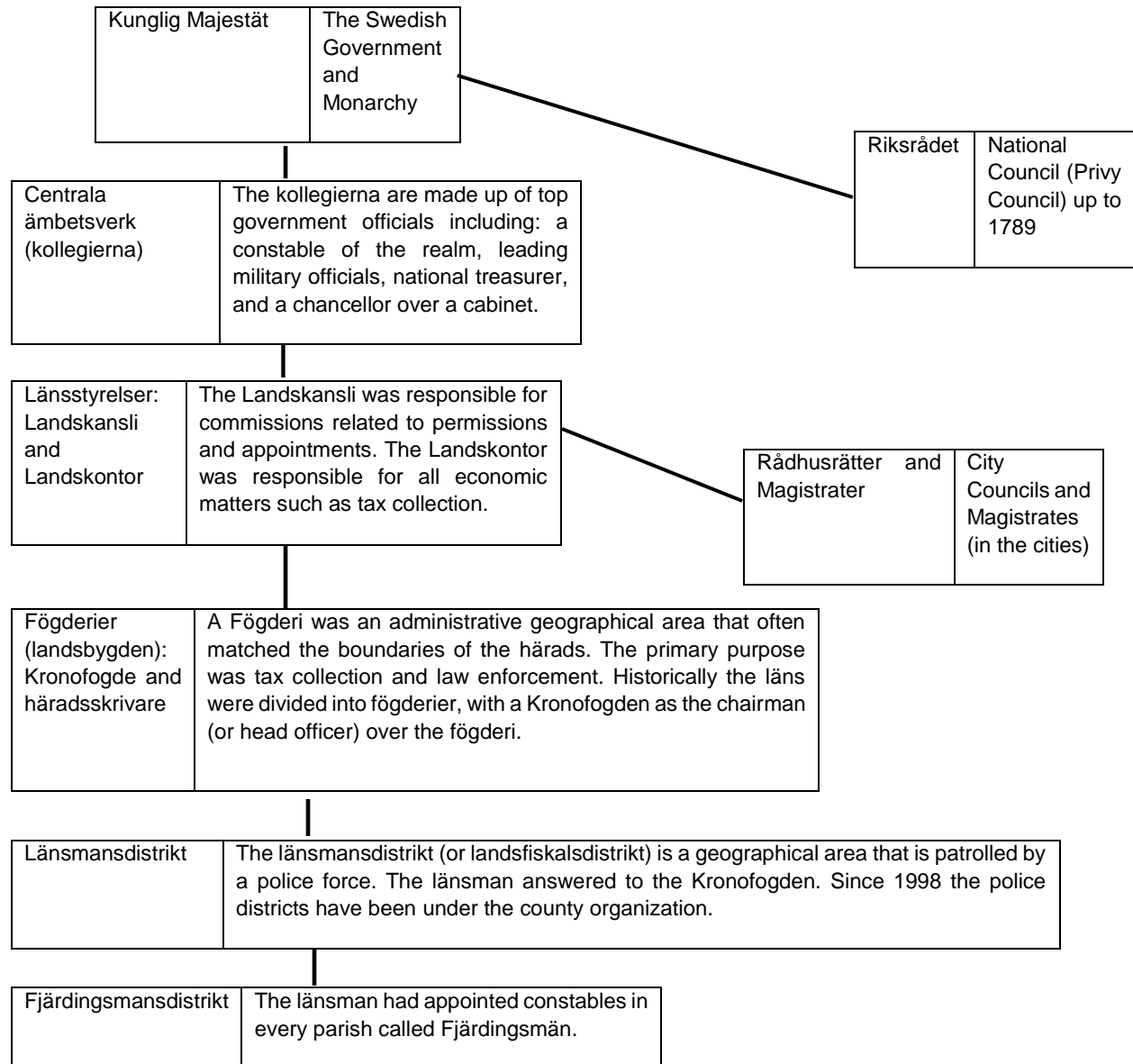
Inteckningsprotokoll, Småprotokoll: court decisions often held in between the regular sessions

Organizational structure of the Swedish state church from the 1650's up to the early 1900's:



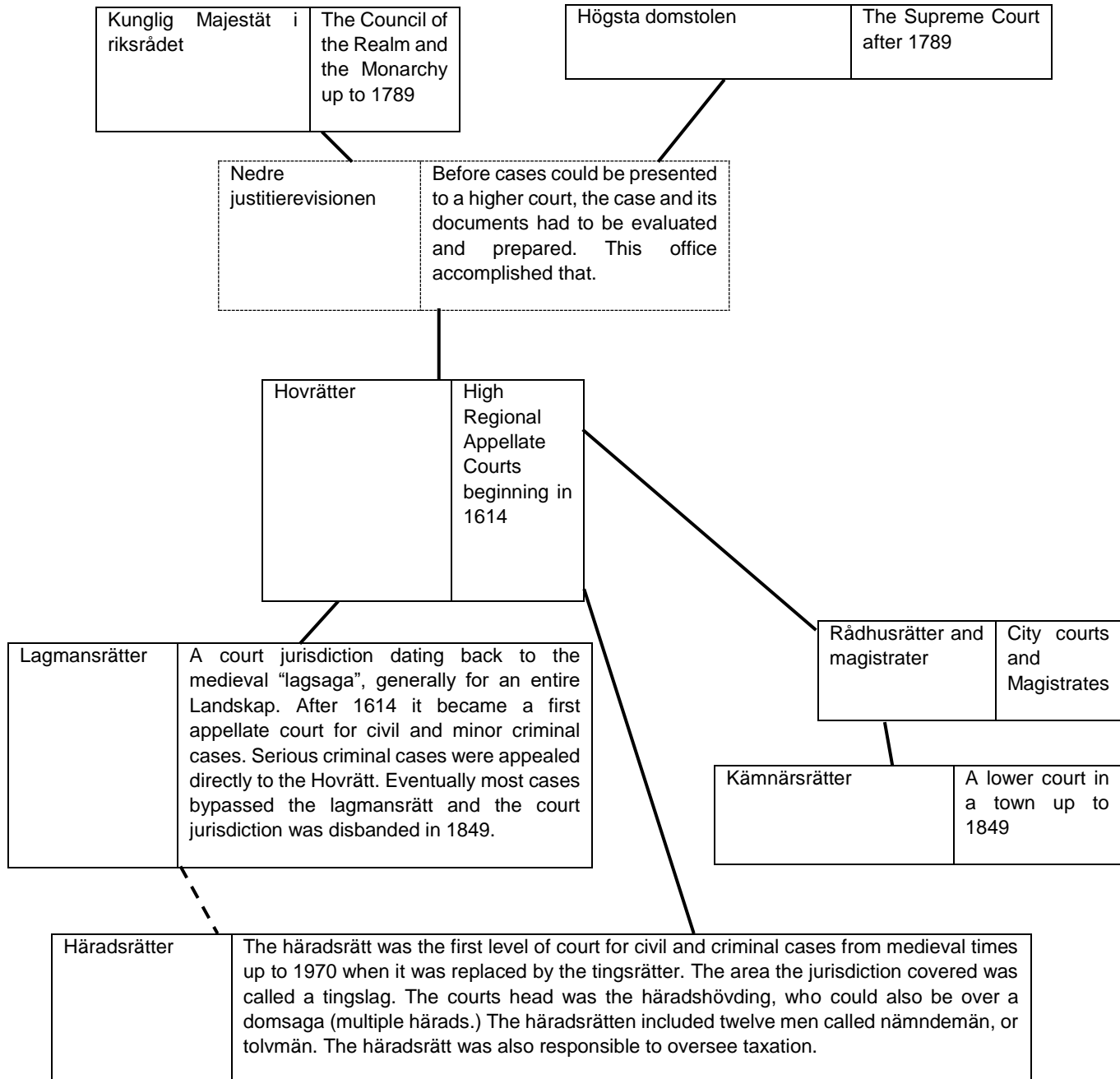
Based upon the Swedish Church Administration structure as found in: [Hur riket styrdes: Förvaltning, politik och arkiv 1520 – 1920](#) by Björn Asker

Organizational structure of the Swedish civil authorities from the mid 1600's up to the beginning of the 1900's:



Based upon the Swedish Civil Administration structure as found in: [Hur riket styrdes: Förvaltning, politik och arkiv 1520 – 1920](#) by Björn Asker

Organizational structure of the judicial system from the mid 1600's up to the beginning of the 1900's:



Based upon the Swedish Judicial Administration structure as found in: [Hur riket styrdes: Förvaltning, politik och arkiv 1520 – 1920](#) by Björn Asker